

Message Text

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PAGE 01 BUENOS 00114 092036Z

67

ACTION ARA-10

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R 091922Z JAN 76

FM AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4060

INFO AMEMBASSY ROME

DIA/DOD WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L BUENOS AIRES 0114

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, PFOR, AR, VT

SUBJECT: PAPAL NUNCIO DESCRIBES GOA PROTEST AND MRS. PERON'S
CONDITION

REF: A) BUENOS AIRES 0005, B) BUENOS AIRES 0049 (NOTAL)

1. IN LUNCHEON CONVERSATION YESTERDAY (JAN 8) THE PAPAL NUNCIO TOLD ME FONMIN ARAUZ CASTEX HAD CALLED HIM IN ON NEW YEAR'S EVE TO PROTEST THE PASTORAL MESSAGE ISSUED BY THE BISHOP OF LA PLATA WHICH HAD CONTAINED SCATHING CRITICISM OF THE ARGENTINE GOVT (SEE REF A). ACCORDING TO THE NUNCIO, THE PROTEST NOTE WAS POORLY DRAFTED AND SHOWED A SUPRISING IGNORANCE OF THE CATHOLIC HIERARCHY AND HOW IT OPERATES. THE FONMIN HAD REMARKED TO HIM THAT THE GOVT WAS SURE THE BISHOP OF LA PLATA AND OTHER BISHOPS WHO HAD RECENTLY CRITICIZED THE GOVT WOULD NOT HAVE DONE SO HAD THEY NOT HAD THE PRIOR APPROVAL OF THE POPE, THROUGH HIS REP IN BUENOS AIRES, THE PAPAL NUNCIO. THE NUNCIO SAID HE HAD RESPONDED THAT THIS WAS NOT AT ALL THE CASE, AND THAT THE FONMIN AS A GOOD CATHOLIC SHOULD KNOW THAT EACH BISHOP WAS RESPONSIBLE TO GOD. THE NUNCIO SAID HE HAD THUS SIMPLY TURNED ASIDE THE PROTEST, AND DID NOT PLAN TO MAKE ANY FURTHER REPLY.

2. THE NUNCIO SAID MRS. PERON HAD FAILED TO SHOW UP AT THE CEREMONY TO HAND OUT TOYS ON JAN 6(SEE REF B)
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PAGE 02 BUENOS 00114 092036Z

BECAUSE OF EVENTS THE DAY BEFORE WHICH HAD LEFT HER IN

AN EMOTIONAL STATE OF DEEP DEPRESSION. ACCORDING TO THE NUNCIO, THE THREE MILITARY COMMANDERS CALLED ON HER JAN 5 AND FLATLY DEMANDED HER RESIGNATION. SHE REFUSED TO GIVE IT, AND A STORMY SCENE ENSUED. THE INTERVIEW ENDED WITH MRS. PERON BURSTING INTO TEARS AND SHOUTING THAT SHE WOULD NOT RESIGN AND THAT THE MILITARY DID NOT HAVE ENOUGH FORCE TO OUST HER FROM THE PRESIDENCY (SEE SEPARATE DAO MESSAGE).

3. ALTHOUGH THE NUNCIO DID NOT MENTION IT, AFTER HER MEETING WITH THE THREE MILITARY COMMANDERS, MRS. PERON CHAIRED A CABINET MEETING WHICH WENT ON UNTIL THE EARLY MORNING HOURS OF JAN 6, AND AT WHICH SEVERAL BITTER DIVISIONS WITHIN HER CIRCLE OF ADVISERS REPORTEDNLY CAME TO THE FORE. HAVING GONE THROUGH TWO SUCH DISTURBING ENCOUNTERS ON THE SAME DAY AND HAVING BEEN UP UNTIL ALMOST DAWN, IT IS NO WONDER THAT MRS. PERON DID NOT APPEAR TO HAND OUT TOYS TO CHILDREN ON THE DAY OF KINGS.

4. THE NUNCIO TOLD ME MRS. PERON HAD ASKED TO CALL ON HIM IN THE EVENING (JAN 9). HE ASSUMED SHE WISHED TO SEEK SPIRITUAL GUIDANCE. I NOTE IN THIS MORNING'S PRESS THAT SHE DID NOT INDEED CALL AT THE NUNCIATURA LAST EVENING AND SAW NUNCIO ALONE.
HILL

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